Why I Became A Baptist

by Madison C. Peters D.D.

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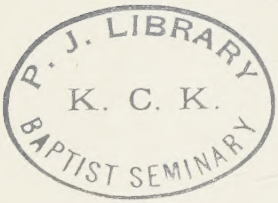

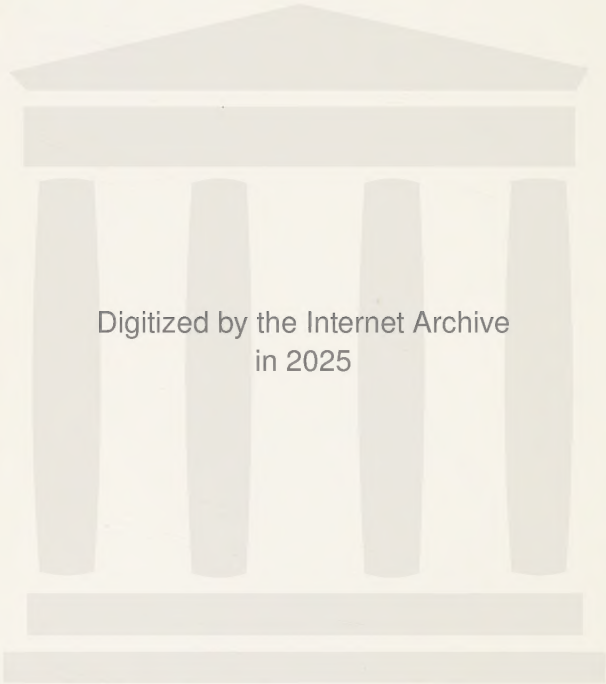
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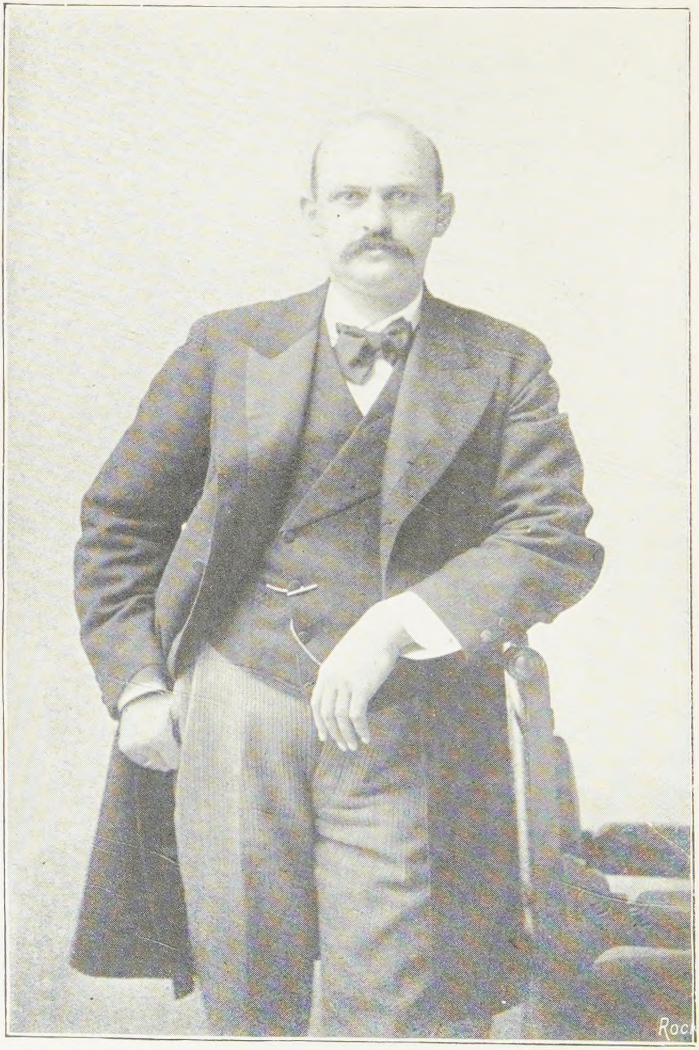

Marion C. Peters

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WHY I BECAME A BAPTIST

BY

MADISON C. PETERS

AUTHOR OF

"Justice to the Jew," "The Jew as a Patriot," "Wit and Wisdom of the Talmud," "Birds of the Bible," etc.

Baptists
Title.

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TO MY FRIEND

Robert Stuart MacArthur

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FOREWORD.

Since my denominational change I have been asked hundreds of times my reasons for leaving the church of my fathers, and as a brief statement of them, I now offer the following pages. What I have spoken on this subject would fill a large volume, but I content myself here with this nutshell argument.

M. C. P.

INTRODUCTION.

This booklet, by Rev. Madison C. Peters, D.D., "Why I Became a Baptist," is admirable in all respects. It states with equal freshness and force the familiar arguments from Scripture, philology and history in favor of baptism. Dr. Peters has a rare gift in "the art of putting things." He gives a fresh setting to old truths, and he clothes familiar arguments with a new and attractive dress. He covers all the essential points in the argument with satisfactory completeness. He omits nothing in the discussion needful to the conclusiveness of his argument. The manner in which he describes his own experience in realizing the unscripturalness of infant baptism is interesting in itself and forceful in its relation to the discussion.

Because of his training and experience outside of the Baptist denomination Dr. Peters approaches the whole subject from a fresh

point of departure; he is, therefore, able to put some old truths at new angles of vision. The spirit of his discussion is commendable to a remarkable degree. With here and there a gleam of the wit which is always characteristic of his healthful mind and vigorous body, his treatise is charmingly illumined; but his wit is never heated to a spark which will burn, or even irritate his former co-religionists or any of his opponents in the discussion of baptism.

The kindly manner in which Dr. Peters left his former church and denomination is worthy of all praise. His conduct in this regard is characterized by good taste, courteous words, and a thoroughly Christian spirit. In all these respects it differed widely from the way in which some men have signalized their change of denominations. Dr. Peters left his church from no other motive than that of loyalty to the will of Jesus Christ as it is revealed in the New Testament; apart from his over-mastering desire to obey Christ, as the King in Zion, he had

every motive to remain in his early church-fellowship. Acting under the impulsion of this lofty motive, a great spiritual blessing came to his own soul. He experienced in his inner life the great truths symbolized by baptism—a death to self and selfish interests and a resurrection to walk with Christ in newness of life. His baptism in the Calvary Church was a memorable occasion; the presence and power of the triune God—audibly or visibly present at the baptism of Jesus—were solemnly and joyously manifest on this occasion. His statement of experience, doctrine, and call to the ministry made before the session of the "Permanent Council" held in the Calvary Church, gave the Baptist denomination as thus represented, the utmost satisfaction, and was also the occasion for extending to Dr. Peters a most cordial and fraternal welcome into the honored ranks of the Baptist ministry. Incidentally the method of his induction into our fellowship helped to determine the true method of welcoming to our ranks ministers of other denominations.

God has greatly blessed Dr. Peters in his heart and work since he took this additional step of obedience to Jesus Christ. It has been an act of renewed consecration to his Lord and Master. Baptist pulpits gave him cordial welcome. The blessing of the great head of the church has rested upon his pulpit ministrations and his pastoral visitations. His pastorate of the Sumner Avenue Church has brought wonderful prosperity to every department of the work, and the prospect is bright for still greater blessings in the near future.

This writer is profoundly grateful to God for the friendship with Dr. Peters, which began when he came to New York, which deepened when his baptism occurred, and which will grow in Christian affection and fraternal appreciation with the passing years.

ROBERT STUART MACARTHUR,
Calvary Baptist Study,
358 W. 57th street, New York.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

Madison C. Peters was born in Lehigh County, Pa., November 6, 1859. His ancestors came from Germany in 1747, and settled in Lehigh County, Pa. His father, Morgan Peters, died at 29, leaving three boys, who are now in the ministry. Madison, the eldest, was only five years old when his father died. He died poor and his mother was the sole provider for the home.

Dr. Peters has made his own way in the world since he was eight years of age. At fourteen he launched out in the grocery business on his own account; at fifteen he taught school. He spent a year at Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pa. Afterwards he spent two years at Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pa. After teaching school for a while he entered Heidelberg Theological Seminary, Tiffin, Ohio, whence he graduated at twenty-

one. He worked his own way through school, doing odd jobs, canvassing for books, preaching and lecturing in country school houses and churches as opportunity offered. His vacation was usually spent in working on the farms near Tiffin, Ohio. Dr. Peters found his gymnasium in harvest fields and behind the plow. Milking developed his grip, and pitching hay broadened his shoulders; while other young men swung Indian clubs, Dr. Peters sawed wood for his daily bread, and instead of pulling chest weights he hoed corn. It was this system of athletics that has given this preacher such toughness of fibre and superb power of endurance.

His Early Ministry.

Dr. Peters' first charge was six congregations in Tippecanoe, Clinton and Carroll Counties, Indiana. His parishioners were Pennsylvania Germans, and he preached alternately in German and English. After riding this circuit for two years he went to Terre Haute, Indiana, where he spent six months in organ-

izing the Washington Avenue Presbyterian Church. He was next urged to go to Ottawa, Illinois, to a church which had never been a success. It had been closed entirely for two years and only twenty members were left. He undertook the work in that city of twelve thousand inhabitants. The Ottawa *Daily Times* says of his work there: "No building in the city would hold his audiences, and it is a literal fact that the streets in front of his church in the summer have been crowded with carriage loads of people, listening to what they might hear through the open doors. People came twenty and thirty miles to hear him." One hundred and forty-five joined the church by profession the first year of his pastorate. His fame as a preacher and winner of souls reached Philadelphia, and at twenty-four he was called to the Old First Presbyterian Church on Buttonwood street, below Sixth. Of his farewell sermon at Ottawa, Illinois, the *Daily Journal* said: "Fully four thousand gathered in Washington Square last night to hear the farewell

address of Rev. Madison C. Peters. As early as six o'clock people began to assemble in the square to get advantageous positions, and by seven o'clock the square was a perfect jam, while the streets were thronged with carriages."

Five Years in Philadelphia.

The Philadelphia church was an honored old church, but it was way downtown and was threatened with dissolution, but in less than three months the spacious auditorium was filled to overflowing. For over a year Dr. Peters held "Overflow Meetings" in the basement of his church, preaching twice every Sunday night. Dr. Peters was in great demand outside of his pulpit as an after dinner speaker, lecturer and preacher on special occasions. From September, 1888, to June, 1889—nine months, Dr. Peters spoke two hundred and sixty-one times.

Among the many kindly notices of his work in Philadelphia we publish below an editorial from the *Daily News* of Philadelphia:

"The Rev. Madison C. Peters has preached his last sermon as a Philadelphia minister, he has made his last appeal to the vast congregation as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, on Buttonwood street, and he goes from Philadelphia and from his old church with the best wishes of his numerous friends and the undying affection of a large family that have gathered around him Sunday after Sunday to listen to the eloquent words of wisdom that fell from his lips.

"This young clergyman is a marvel to those who cannot understand what genius and energy and good common sense and sterling manhood, fused by the fire of a divine passion, can accomplish. He came to this city five years ago, a youth of twenty-four, but during those five years this almost untried and unknown youth has accomplished results that maturity and experience dared not attempt. He came to an almost empty church, in an unfashionable locality, to an old and unattractive building, and with a magic touch—the magic touch of genius and hard work—he accomplished a transformation that mystified those who watched his career.

"In a little time crowds flocked to hear him, his fame as an eloquent preacher was heralded abroad, his words were treasured up; the papers reported what he said, for they recognized the fact that some one was speaking every

week who had something to say, and the boldness to deliver his message without the slightest regard to adverse criticism or the natural dislike of humanity to listen to the whole truth. He at once took a giant hold upon the great throngs which crowded his church, and he never lost that hold, for to-day his popularity is greater than ever. He has the most consummate tact in reaching the minds of those who differ from him, with a great good nature that wins for him friends by the score and a genius for hard work which is almost unparalleled. We believe that great as has been his success, yet the brilliant career of Madison C. Peters has only begun."

Called to New York.

In June, 1889, Dr. Peters accepted a call to the Bloomingdale Reformed Church, Broadway and West Sixty-eighth street, New York City, one of the handsomest church edifices in this city of magnificent churches. Inherited wealth enabled the small congregation in the new West End to build the church. It remained for Dr. Peters to gather the congregation. Beginning with less than one hundred, the Bloomingdale Church became one of the largest and

Bloomingdale Reformed Church

most influential churches in the great city. His evening congregations were the largest in New York, overflowing by hundreds the capacity of the building. The daily metropolitan papers contained his sermons every Monday, and through the various newspaper syndicates his sermons were regularly sent broadcast throughout the United States and Canada, and frequently appeared in England, Scotland and Ireland. Dr. Peters' congregation represented eleven different denominations.

On June 3, 1890, Dr. Peters was married to Miss Sara H. Hart, of Philadelphia. Two daughters and one son bless the union.

In June, 1895, Ursinus College and Heidelberg University, where he struggled so hard for an education, conferred on him the honorary title of Doctor of Divinity. Dr. Peters is the youngest man upon whom these very conservative institutions have ever conferred this honor.

As Author.

Dr. Peters has published, besides hundreds of pamphlets, magazine articles, etc., the follow-

ing books: "Justice to the Jew," "The Wit and Wisdom of the Talmud," "The Great Hereafter," "The Panacea for Poverty," "Empty Pews," "Sanctified Spice," "Popular Sins," "Wrongs to Be Righted," "The Path of Glory," "The Birds of the Bible," etc. *The Metropolitan Pulpit*, issued monthly, is devoted exclusively to the publication of his complete and authorized sermons. Through the American News Company and other agencies Dr. Peters' sermons in book and pamphlet forms now have a circulation of over 150,000 copies a year.

Dr. Peters is in great demand as a lecturer. He has just enough of the poetic element to dress his thoughts in attractive form, his wit is charming, few can tell a story better than he, and his graceful gestures, marvelous voice, appropriate action, biting sarcasm, epigrammatic power and blood-red earnestness never fail to melt, inflame and overwhelm his auditors.

On February 1, 1900, Dr. Peters resigned his pastorate of the Bloomingdale Church, for the reasons given in the following letter to his congregation:

Letter of Resignation.

To My Dear People:

I have sent to the Consistory my resignation as Pastor of the Bloomingdale Church and have requested them to unite with me in asking the New York Classis to dissolve our pleasant relationship as Pastor and People. My sole reason for resigning this position of power and influence is, that after many years of honest and prayerful investigation, I have come to the deliberate conclusion that the Bible—the Protestant's only rule of faith—teaches baptism for believers only. I can therefore, no longer, in good conscience, practice infant baptism, or sprinkling as baptism.

I am a minister of the Reformed Church, and, while I am thus connected, I shall not give my reasons for the change of conviction. I love the Reformed Church. It is the church of my fathers. I admire its breadth and depth. Those who have attended my ministry through all these years will bear me witness that I have

always been a loyal son, and I had fondly hoped that I could serve my denomination in this church with my riper years, as I gave it the ardor of my youth. But I must be true to myself, practice only what I believe, and preach what I can practice.

To you, my dear people, whose kindly counsel, unwavering loyalty and generous support in every good work have made my labors both pleasant and successful, I give my heartiest thanks.

My congregation is composed of not less than eleven different denominations of Protestants, while hundreds of Jews and Catholics constantly attended my ministry. I thank God to-day that He has permitted me to bring His message to such various minds and hearts as have constantly gathered within these walls.

All the present members of this church, except eleven, came into it during my ministry of nearly eleven years. I have, therefore, and always shall have, a peculiar love for and an undying interest in the Bloomingdale Church.

For your love I give you my love, and for your prayers my prayers.

Your Pastor and friend,

MADISON C. PETERS.

NEW YORK, February 1, 1900.

Dr. Peters, according to *The Tribune* report, added:

"It was my desire to read this letter last Sabbath, but I was prevailed upon to withhold it until our annual meeting of the Board of Officers. Somehow my intention reached the press, and through circumstances beyond my control the public received the information to which you were first entitled. It is not in my heart to add much to what I have written. You have been for eleven years as kind a people as any minister ever enjoyed. The expressions of regret at my going from you, expressions I believe unanimous, have touched my heart, and make me love you more, if possible, than ever before. I cannot conceive of a happier pastorate than I have had. When I came here I

found sixty-four members, with a congregation of less than 100. I have received nearly 600 into communicant membership, mostly on profession of faith. This church was built here not because it had a denominational constituency in this section of the city, but because we owned lots which could not be used for any other purpose. People from all denominations have worshipped and worked with us, many without transferring their church relationship, so that we have practically sustained for eleven years an all-denominational church. We have done a great work, carried on absolutely by the voluntary offerings of those who worshipped here, although I am convinced that I myself can do more and better work within denominational lines, and yet I am convinced that the work of this church in this section must be continued on the lines which I have followed. There has been a great change in the character of the people, as a whole, living between Sixtieth and Sixty-eighth streets, and Central Park and the river.

Where we had a few years ago a settled population, we now have very largely comers and goers, and the congregation here must be of necessity largely a procession, and yet I know of no place in the city where a church is needed more than right here. I have been able to carry on this work by contributions from the many. Now that there may be fewer people to attend here, I hope that God may put it into the heart of some rich man in this church or in the denomination to help this faithful band of workers. Our recent Christmas offering amounted to nearly $1,700, and the month of January, 1900, has been the most prosperous month financially in the ninety-five years' history of the church. The practical character of our work gives you a just claim upon the generosity not only of your denomination, but upon every lover of humanity. As for my own future, concerning which you have shown such anxiety, I can only say that I shall follow the guidance of Providence. I believe that under God my best days are yet to come. I feel as though I

could preach better than ever. I could have ended my days in the ministry of this congregation, but I go out because my interpretation of the Bible leads me to another church of God. I must follow this Book as I understand it and not as somebody else interprets it for me. People have said to me a hundred times within a few days: "What, leave such warm friends, such a fine church, such a splendid residence!" Yes, position and friends, to whom I have been endeared through the tenderest ministries and relations of life which come to a pastor and his people, all these must be second to my conscientious convictions. I could not do otherwise, if I would. For you, who have come here from the various denominations and worked with me, I entertain the hope that you may remain here where you are needed. The ladies in the guild, who have done such self-sacrificing work for the poor of this part of our city, now more than ever need the loyalty of all my friends. In our Sunday school, which has grown from twenty-one to 600, you are needed.

A new man can hardly expect, for awhile at least, to draw the strangers who have helped continually to crowd this auditorium. Therefore the greater need of intenser loyalty. He is my best friend who stays right here at his post and does his duty."

Every kindness and consideration was shown Dr. Peters, both by his church and the denomination; deep and universal was the regret expressed at his withdrawal from the field of usefulness with which he was so long identified. The straightforward, manly and quiet way in which Dr. Peters severed his connection with his old denomination convinced the people whom he left as well as those to whom he came that he was actuated only by conscience and right motives. The benedictions of the Pedobaptist Press showed that Dr. Peters was held in high respect, and that he lived in such a way among them as to make his departure absolutely without a single parting fling of criticism and jealousy which sometimes are expressed when an eminent clergyman leaves one denomination

for another. What the *Homiletic Review* said was said in substance by scores of secular and religious papers, about the manner of Dr. Peters' going:

"The Rev. Madison C. Peters, of the Reformed Church, has come to accept the principles of the Baptists. He does not believe in the sprinkling of infants as baptism, and refuses henceforth to practice it. Here are all the materials for the wildest and bitterest controversy. The Reformed Church must muster all its forces to oust him from his pulpit. He must be desperately determined to hold it. So many of his church are personally attached to him that by a stubborn fight he can be sure to divide the church. The great Baptist denomination, through all its pulpits and all its publications, should fill the land with 'persecution.' This would furnish the press with sweet and consoling items for many a day.

"On the contrary, Dr. Peters quietly resigns his position among those whose doctrines he no longer believes, and goes to join those whose doctrines he does believe. How simple and expedient! How consistent! How manly! How distinctly it 'makes for peace!'

"Not very sensational, it is true. The retiring pastor has lost his chance of being a martyr. He has thrown away a fine opportunity to dis-

rupt a church. He will not be worth much to the 'yellow journals.' But for a Christian teacher, he gives certainly a better example of 'the meekness and gentleness of Christ;' and as a matter of common sense, simple honesty, and manly self-respect, his course seems really the only one. Why should a man wish to hold a position among any company of believers in order to antagonize the things they believe in?

"Dr. Peters has shown a way by which all heresy trials might be avoided in the Christian Church forevermore. The Christian communion which he now joins will not think the less of him because he has not left a wrecked church and bitter controversy behind him in the denomination from which he withdraws."

His Work in Brooklyn.

Prominent pulpits in different parts of the country were offered to Dr. Peters, but he determined to stay in New York. He did not wait for something to turn up. Last June he began to supply the pulpit of the Sumner Avenue Baptist Church, corner Decatur street, Brooklyn. This church, formerly called Calvary, seemed doomed to die, on account of its great debt, and the Baptists of Brooklyn feared that the denomination would suffer the humility of

seeing one of its churches go under the hammer. With Dr. Peters' coming new life entered the church, and during his ministry of about twenty months a $37,000 debt was paid, while thousands more were raised for improvements. Dr. Peters has always felt that his mission is to reach the masses, and the call to the Immanuel Baptist Tabernacle, in Baltimore, was accepted, because Dr. Peters felt that on account of its strategic location he could reach the great crowds which he was accustomed to gather in New York. In this Dr. Peters has not been disappointed. At this writing Dr. Peters has been at the Tabernacle a little more than two months. The debt of $4,000, which had been resting on the chapel ever since it was built, nearly twenty years ago, was provided for in the Easter offering. Plans are now under consideration for the building of a new structure large enough to hold the thousands who are thronging to hear this earnest preacher.

WALTER L. HUGHES.

April 15, 1902.

Statement of Experience and Belief before Permanent Council Called to Recognize Dr. Peters as a Baptist Minister.

When I was fourteen years of age I realized the first sign of a call to the ministry—an insatiable greed for the salvation of men. I felt "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel." I believe I entered the ministry because I could not help it. After teaching school for a few months, I started off to college. It was not a sudden impulse, but, I believe, a calm, thoughtful, deliberate, anxious consideration. That I might be sure that I had not taken whim for inspiration, or a childish preference for a heavenly call, I did not join a church until I was about sixteen, when I was assured in my own soul that I had experimentally realized what I had intellectually believed—and no sooner had I made this public profession of faith on Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, than I began to preach as I had opportunity.

As to my beliefs: I believe in God. I believe that the highest conception of God ever given to the world is given us by Christ in the word "Father," and I believe that that thought, the paternal idea of God, rather than the monarchical, upon which the theologies of the past have been mainly built, will rule the theological systems of the future.

I believe that Jesus Christ was what He again and again claimed to be—God, in the true and proper sense of the word. He claimed the prerogatives of God. I believe that His disciples understood Him perfectly; that, in speaking of Himself as He did, He claimed oneness in knowledge, power and glory with the Father, an intrinsic affinity with Him in essence. I believe that Christ was what He professed to be, or He was an impostor. There is no middle ground. Either He was the most stupendous fraud that ever deceived the world, or He was "God manifest in the flesh," and it is only by this latter belief that I can enter into the harmonies of His person; and the blaze

of miracles in which He was born, lived, died, rose again, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, seems but the natural and fitting manifestation and triumphant culmination of such a Being.

I believe in the Holy Ghost as the Person sent of God to bring the believer in Christ into a conscious spiritual relationship.

I believe that the perfect law of God requires perfect obedience, and that, having no ability to make our own satisfaction, the incarnation of the Son of God became a necessity; that God accepts the satisfaction rendered by Christ, and permits us to offer His merits for our demerits; that He accepts this satisfaction from all who have faith in Christ, and releases them from the penalty to which they stood exposed. I believe that our personal faith in the atonement, while not rendering us innocent, by what the Savior has done for us, nevertheless, causes us to be treated as such before God, so that we are no longer liable to punishment.

I do not believe that the sinner can be saved

through the merits of Christ without any work on his part. Amongst men there may be a change of state without any change of character. A prisoner may be acquitted or pardoned, but he may go with all the principles of wickedness strong as ever within him. His condition is changed, but not his character. I believe that, in God's dealings with men, saving faith is followed by justification; regeneration follows through the Holy Spirit, and sanctification accompanies it. Whenever there is a change of state, there is a change of character.

I believe that salvation must result in a growth—it consists in the curing of sin and the perfecting of nature. The atonement, the at-one-ment that saves, is at-one-ness with God in Christ—spiritual nearness to Him—identity of worth with Him.

I believe in the inspiration of the Bible from lid to lid—not in spots only. I use the word inspiration in its literal meaning—God inspired—God breathed. "Holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." I be-

lieve that the Bible is inspired in a manner wholly unlike any other good book. The Bible alone declares: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts." "Hear ye the word of the Lord." "The word of the Lord came unto me."

I believe that the Bible is our infallible rule of faith and practice.

I believe that, of all revealed truths, not one is more clearly revealed, than that, as an evidence of our faith in Christ, and upon repentence of our sins, we are to be baptized, and that only believers are the proper subjects for baptism. I believe that the plain teaching of the Bible points to baptism by immersion only, and I believe that baptism is the prerequisite to the Lord's Supper.

I believe in the decrees of God. I believe in the freedom and majesty of the human will. I believe God desires the salvation of all men, but that the human will can block His purposes: "Ye would not come to me that ye might have life." Every man is the architect of his spiritual destiny. The "whosoever will"

are the elect, and the whosoever won't, are the non-elect. If God saves all men, whether they will to be saved or not, He must take away the moral agency with which He has endowed them, and reverse His nature as revealed in Nature and His Word.

I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Death makes no change in our moral character. The passions and propensities of the soul follow it into eternity, so that, even if there were no condemnation from God, still the sinner would be in hell. Man carries in his bosom the elements of woe, and the circumstances in which he will be placed will call them into action.

I believe that the colossal and overmastering thought of the cross, the thought of a crucified Redeemer flung into men's souls, is the power of God to attract attention, compel conviction and arouse to action. Believing that here and now, or nowhere and never, we are to prove our fitness for heaven, I believe that the all-penetrating, all-pervading, all-animating, and

all-inflaming motive of the preacher should be love for souls of men. I believe that before the almightiness of the cross there can stand no resistance, and I believe that the sermon in which Christ is not presented as the Savior of sinful men, will be to the soul only the beauty of the snowdrop and the sublimity of the desert.

WHY I BECAME A BAPTIST.

I.

The Voice of History.

I became a Baptist through a study of baptism. I found in my studies that the acknowledged impartial historians of all denominations, such as Neander, Kurtz and Mosheim, among the Lutherans; Venema, among the Dutch Reformed; Schneckenberger, among the German Reformed; Pressensé, among the French Reformed; Waddington, Stanley, and Geike, among the English Episcopalians; Schaff, among American Presbyterians; Fischer, among the American Congregationalists; Bellarmine, Muratori, and Kraus, among the Roman Catholics—all the standard historians of the sprinkling churches, unite in one voice, that baptism in the primitive church, which was the sign of admission into it, was a proper

baptism, administered by immersion, and by immersion only.

All the denominations which sprinkle descend from the Church of Rome. She admits that the primitive mode was immersion, but asserts that she has the right to change the ordinance. The Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and other churches, seceded from the Church of Rome. The Methodist Church came from the Episcopal Church, and they all, like the Church of Rome, sprinkle or pour. But throughout Christendom, wherever the Pope of Rome has never borne sway, millions now practice immersion, and have since the first introduction of Christianity among them. The Greek Church, the oldest Christian Church in the world, occupying the lands which witnessed the rise and first triumphs of Christian truth, representing to-day nearly a third of Christendom, has always and invariably practised immersion—amid the storms of Siberia, Armenia, Russia, and other lands, perhaps the coldest civilized climates of the world.

The first time we hear something other than immersion as baptism is about the middle of the third century, when one, Novatian, was sick and he was baptized by having water poured all about him, so that he was as completely drenched with it as if he had been immersed in it. This was not considered, at the time, or for a long time afterward, as a regular baptism, but was called *clinic* baptism, or sick baptism. Well named, was it not?

Many of the Christians had fallen into the heresy that by baptism their sins were forgiven. Eusebius, the historian, says: "It was not lawful to promote one baptized by pouring on his sick-bed to any order of the clergy." In fact, for a great while a stigma rested upon clinic, couch, baptism; and if the diseased person got well, these sick-bed professors, on their recovery, were greeted with sneers, and the clergy sometimes had to appeal to Christians, not to subject their piety to merriment but to treat them as brethren. They were commonly called Clinics, instead of Christians, professors from

fright, sick-bed Christians, who were not likely to be Christians in health. Clinic baptism never became common, and when infant baptism took the place of believers' baptism, and there being no necessity to put off baptism through fear or shame, clinic baptism declined, and was limited to dying babes.

About 811 we read of the first public authority for sprinkling. Some of the French clergy called on Pope Stephen II., saying that there were some infirm and some too small, and inquired if, instead of immersing them, they might sprinkle them. To which the Pope replied: "If such were cases of necessity, and if the sprinkling were performed in the name of the Holy Trinity, it should be held valid." We hear no more about sprinkling until the first Council of Ravenna, in the year 1311, decreed that either immersion or sprinkling was equally valid baptism.

Dean Stanley, Episcopalian, says: "For the first thirteen centuries the almost exclusive practice was by immersion." Martin Luther

says: "Baptizo is a Greek word to be translated in Latin by immersio, as when we plunge something into water, that it may be completely covered with water." Again Luther says: "Although the custom has grown out of use with most persons, yet they ought to be entirely immersed and immediately drawn out. The baptizing ought, therefore, to correspond to the signification of baptism, so as to set forth a sure and full sign of it." If the Lutherans were good Lutherans, they would be good immersionists.

John Calvin, the father and founder of Presbyterianism, while contending that the mode was "of no consequence," that "in this matter churches ought to be free, according to the difference of countries," yet acknowledged: "The word baptizo, however, signifies to immerse, and it is certain that immersion was followed by the ancient church."

The Westminster Assembly of Divines, who met in 1643, were appointed as a commission by the Parliament, to compose the distracted

thought of the time. They were good men, but no better than have lived since. The doctrinal points they carried were carried by a bare majority, with strong protest against them. Baptism was among the subjects under hot discussion. Twenty-four voted for retaining dipping, but twenty-five voted for "pouring or sprinkling water on the face," and the following year Parliament sanctioned their decision, and decreed that sprinkling should be the legal mode. Now, if that one majority, secured through the casting vote of Dr. Lightfoot, which decided against immersion, more than 250 years ago, had been on the other side, our Presbyterian brethren would be the good Baptists which many of them had been previous to this convocation.

John Wesley, while he was in Georgia, made this record in his own handwriting: "Mary Welsh was baptized (Saturday, Feb. 21, 1736) according to the custom of the first church, and the rule of the Church of England, by immersion." In his "Journal," May 5, 1736, he

writes that, being asked to baptize a child, the parents insisted against dipping, and, on the mother declaring that the child was not weak, he declined to baptize it, clearly leaving us to understand that, in his opinion, immersion was an imperative mode, unless there were satisfactory evidences of weakness. If our Methodist friends would follow the practice of their founder, they, too, would baptize according to the appointment of Christ, and not for convenience sake.

Sprinkling did not come into full use in the Church, either in England or Scotland, till after the Reformation. Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth were both immersed, while James I., was sprinkled by the Scotch divines, who, while they renounced the authority of the Pope, implicitly acknowledged the authority of Calvin, and imported this practice from Geneva into England, and, through the favor of James, sprinkling came into practice in England. After Cromwell's time, the English Church became the State Church, and the Episcopal

Church, while she retains in the Prayer Book the direction for immersion, and gives it the preference, by a strange inconsistency practises sprinkling. And so, if our Episcopalian neighbors decided this question on the principles embodied in their creed, and as endorsed by the voice of history, they, too, would be good immersionists.

The Baptist Church, instead of separating the Christian churches on account of baptism, would become the real bond of union, if the churches followed their convictions, as embodied in the teachings and traditions of those whom they are proud to acknowledge as founders and fathers.

II.

The Word Baptism.

The word baptism is the Greek word transferred to our language, but not translated. What baptizo means, baptize must mean. Catholic and Protestant scholarship agree that the classical meaning of baptism is immersion.

The Douay Bible, with Haydock's notes, specially approved by Pope Pius IX., says: "The word baptism signifies a washing, particularly when it is done by immersion." Prof. Harnack, who stands first among scholars who have made Christian antiquities a specialty, says: "Baptize undoubtedly signifies immersion. No proof can be found that it signifies anything else in the New Testament, and the most ancient Christian literature."

You will search in vain for one standard lexicon in classical Greek, in which any other meaning than immersion is given as the orig-

inal significance of baptizo, and the acknowledged theologians of all the sprinkling churches, like Lange, Gerhard, and Krummacher, among the Lutherans; Ebrard, among the German Reformed; Van Osterzee, among the Dutch Reformed; Dr. Philip Schaff, the foremost scholar of American Presbyterians (who confessed that, "without prejudice no other interpretation would ever have been given to Bible baptism, but immersion"), Prof. Moses Stuart (Congregationalist), who said: "I cannot see how it is possible for any candid man, who examines the subject, to deny that Apostolic baptism was immersion"; Pusey, Maurice, and Lidden, among Episcopalians; Bossuet and Dens, among Roman Catholics—the unbiased verdict of all competent scholarship, even of non-Baptists, is, that the baptism of Jesus and the Apostles was immersion, and that Baptists are maintaining the holy ordinance as instituted by Christ. Says Prof. Paine, of Bangor (Congregationalist) Theological Seminary: "Any scholar who de-

nies that immersion was the baptism of the Christian Church for thirteen centuries betrays utter ignorance or sectarian blindness."

If baptism meant to "sprinkle" or "pour," then we would expect to find the inspired writers use "rantizo," to sprinkle, or "keo," to pour, and if there was more than one baptism, we would expect the writers, at least once, to use these words interchangeably with "baptizo." But we find that, notwithstanding the richness and variety of the Greek language, they used the one word "baptizo" only, which, according to the consensus of scholars of all ages and creeds, means to dip or immerse, and nothing else, and, as if to emphasize one baptism, they repeat the one word baptizo, in its various forms, one hundred and twenty-five times.

If baptizo means to immerse, it cannot mean to sprinkle—the meaning as between immersion and sprinkling represents as different an act as flying and walking.

III.

The Mode and the Subjects of John's Baptism.

The baptism of John is called, again and again, "the baptism of repentance," and "baptism to repentance." He required of all whom he admitted to baptism, a profession of repentance, a disposition to become the Messiah's subjects, and he exhorted them to such a conduct as would demonstrate the genuineness of faith and repentance, and, as infants cannot believe and repent, he, of course, did not baptize innocent and unconsenting babes.

Matthew tells us that John baptized the Jerusalem people in Jordan; Mark adds, "in the River Jordan." Running water, to the Jewish mind, was symbolical of cleanliness. The idea that John would go into the water of a river for the purpose of baptizing by sprinkling water on the face, is too absurd to be entertained.

If John had sprinkled for baptism, he might easily have performed the ordinance, in or near Jerusalem, in the Pool of Siloam, the pool called Bethesda, the Upper Pool, the Lower Pool, or Pool of Gihon, and the Brook Cedron, instead of requiring them to journey some miles for the purpose. John baptized in Jordan; that is, immersed. How ridiculous it would be to say John sprinkled or poured the people in the Jordan. The only word that fits and makes sense is immerse.

Immersion was the only mode of outward cleansing, under the old dispensation, where mere water was the element to be employed. Dr. Lightfoot, an Episcopalian, says: "Dipping among the Jews, was a national custom."

The question has been raised: Was there water enough at Jerusalem to immerse the three thousand, and could they all be immersed in one day? Jerusalem abounded in tanks and pools, affording the most ample means for immersion, and, according to actual test, baptism can be administered with ease and solemnity once a minute.

John "baptized in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there," and much water is not needed for sprinkling or pouring, but for immersion. The margin of the Revised Version renders *much* "many," "many waters," but the idea is still that of abundance.

Christ " was baptized of John in Jordan, and straightway coming up out of the water he saw the heavens open." Can any candid mind fail to be convinced that Christ went down into the river and was immersed? Phillip and the Eunuch " went down into the water," and " came up out of the water." But it may be said that the Greek preposition translated " into " means " to," and that Phillip and the Eunuch went only to the water. If this is so, then the " wise men " did not go into the house, and did not return " into their own country," and demons did not enter into the swine, and the swine did not run into the sea, and the wicked shall not go into everlasting punishment, nor the righteous into life everlasting, but only close by or up to it. The strange

thing is, that this word is admitted by Pedobaptists to mean into everywhere else, except the baptismal waters. That this passage means that there was enough water there to easily immerse the human body we have the testimony of such eminent commentators as Olshausen, German Lutheran; Alford, Episcopalian; Grotius, Dutch Arminian; Schultz, Roman Catholic, and Campbell, Scotch Presbyterian.

IV.

Christ's Instruction and Apostolic Practice.

Christ's instruction was to make disciples before baptism. Hear what Christ says as to what he intended by his disciples: "Whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Christ's example or practice does not, therefore, afford infant baptism any support. He blessed the little children, but he did not baptize them. His command was to teach, make disciples, then to baptize the believers.

To repent, to believe, to be baptized, are personal duties. Parents can not obey for their children. Baptism is a command to each individual, to be obeyed by himself. Baptism must be an act of personal obedience. You can not obey God by proxy.

Christ's command, to repent and believe, is

not more positive and plain than the command to be baptized. The Lord's great commission enjoins baptism only on those who believe. On the Day of Pentecost Peter said to the inquiring multitude, " Repent and be baptized." We are told that they " gladly received his word " and were baptized. The Samaritans were baptized " when they believed." It was when the Ethiopian could say that he " believed in Christ with all his heart " that he was baptized. Not until Paul had been filled with the Holy Ghost was he baptized. It was not until they were " taught " and " believed " and " received the Holy Ghost " that Cornelius and his friends were baptized. It was when Crispus and his house believed on the Lord that they were baptized. Paul tells us that those only are fit subjects for baptism who are ready to bury the old sinful life and lead a new and holy life. Peter tells us that baptism is " the answer of a good conscience toward God."

V.

What Baptism Symbolizes.

But, baptism, we are told, is only a symbol —yes, only a symbol—the glorious symbol of our faith—and because baptism is a symbol I preach it; for, if you destroy the symbol you also destroy the thing symbolized. Surrender immersion and you have no symbol of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, or of your own death to sin and resurrection to a new life. I never could, and I do not know of a Pedobaptist who ever did, preach on Romans vi: 3-5: "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his

resurrection." What likeness is there to the resurrection of Christ, unless the whole body is lifted from the grave-like waters into the upper air and light?

The Stars and Stripes, for which so many noble thousands have gone forth, willing to brave every hardship and peril; gone forth from homes fondly cherished, and friends dearly loved, and on red fields and seas of battle fearlessly stood, and given for the nation the price of their blood,—is only a symbol, but, to the patriotic American, it is everything —the law, the honor, the life of the nation itself. The history of our whole country, our Constitution, government, liberty, and firesides and altars are gathered into the ample folds of this symbol. When it waves over us we feel the country in our veins.

So with the Christ-appointed symbol of baptism, it is the symbol of the life, passion, death and resurrection of Christ—the one grand fundamental characterizing truth of the Gospel, that Jesus Christ has abolished death, rolled

away the stone from the tomb of human hope, and painted upon the black cloud of death the rainbow of immortality. And when I went down into the baptismal waters, I symbolized my death in sin and resurrection to holiness, by being buried by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so also I might walk in newness of life.

The most transcendent and happiest event in the history of my life was the moment when, confessing my faith in Jesus the Crucified, I set forth my death in and with Him in the act of baptism, whereby I was visibly buried in the likeness of His death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection. Whatever else I may forget, I shall never forget my baptism. No man ever does. He really feels that he has come out from the world and has entered upon a new career in life. I am sorry for the Christian who, by being christened in infancy, has lost this glorious privilege and blessing, this grand and solemn lesson.

What onlooker has ever been impressed by the sprinkling of an unconscious babe? But I care not how desperate in sin and wrapt in marble a man may be, how invulnerable to the most terrifying denunciations and inaccessible to the most touching remonstrances, when he witnesses an immersion of believers in Christ, the symbolism is so eloquent, suggestive, impressive, and convincing, both as to Christ and the disciple, his heart must be moved to contrition and repentance. When one is baptized according to the Scripture command and example he illustrates the tear-compelling story of Jesus and His love, and when there is mustered before men in baptism all the tempest which beat upon that sacred head, and all love unfolded which welcomed that tempest for poor lost men, men will not, cannot, be proof against that.

VI.

Infant Baptism Unscriptural.

We have shown that the uniform Scriptural plan was, first a personal confession of faith in Christ, and then baptism. We can not find a single instance in the New Testament that was not a matter of choice by those who were baptized. There is no command for infant baptism. There is not one example recorded. The Apostles never, in any instance, practised infant baptism. The late Archbishop Hughes (Roman Catholic) writes: "It does not appear from Scripture that even one infant was ever baptized, therefore Protestants should reject, on their own principle, infant baptism as an unscriptural usage." Professor Gottlieb Lange (Lutheran) says: "Would the Protestant Church fulfil and attain its final destiny, the baptism of infants must of necessity be abolished. It cannot, from any point of view, be justified by the Holy Scriptures."

I rejected infant baptism because it was unscriptural. Peter did say: "The promise is unto you and your children." But that text has not the slightest bearing on the question of baptism. The promise here mentioned is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the word translated children means posterity.

There are only five households mentioned in Scripture as having been baptized. First, Acts, tenth chapter. "Cornelius, a devout man and one that feared God with all his house." "While Peter yet spake these words the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." "Then answered Peter, can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." Not the least suggestion of baptism of infants. Second, That of Lydia, Acts 16:13-15. Of whom did her household consist? To prove infant baptism you must first prove that Lydia had a husband; second, that she had children, and, third,

that the children were babies. It would seem from the story that she was a single woman at the head of a house, and at the head of a dyeing business, and the fair conclusion is that the household were servants; or, if she had children, then her husband was dead, and that the children were grown up, capable of instruction, faith and baptism as Christ commanded. That there were babies in the house, and that they were baptized, is a groundless surmise. Third, That of the jailor. Acts, xvi: 33. But to his household the word was first spoken, and all of them, we are told, were believing in God. Fourth, Crispus at Corinth. Acts 18: 8. "And Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house. And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized." Here we have a distinct declaration of household faith and believers' baptism. Fifth, That of Stephanas: I. Cor. 1:16 of whose household it is said that they addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.

The strongest argument for infant christening is from the so-called analogy of the Old Testament. If infant baptism has come in place of circumcision, where, in the New Testament, can you find such a statement, direct or indirect? But, admit the analogy for argument's sake, how comes it that now female as well as male children are to be baptized, and why are the servants in Christian families now not to be baptized in the faith of their master, both of which cases contradict the argument drawn from the circumcision of Abraham and his household? Paul speaks of "a circumcision not made with hands," as symbolized in Christian baptism, but there is not a word as to baptism taking the place of circumcision. The Colossians had the circumcision which Christ requires, which is produced through Christ, in living union with the believer. Baptism is nowhere spoken of in Scripture as a "covenant" or "sign in the flesh." If it is a seal, it is a continually broken seal, because we know that persons who are baptized fall away and are

lost, and, therefore, baptism is not the seal of salvation. The true seal is inward. The "new" and "better" covenant is in Christ's blood, and sealed by his death.

If infant baptism was not instituted by Christ, nor practised in the apostolic age, whence came the custom? The student of church history can readily find the answer. It originated in the early error that baptism was indispensable to salvation. Infants are born in sin. Sin can be washed away only in baptism. Therefore, they must be baptized.

The first mention ever made of infant baptism, by any known author, was by Tertullian, of Northern Africa, about the year 204, and he speaks of it as something previously unknown, and protests against it. The Council of Carthage, that met in 252, hurled this bull at those who questioned infant baptism:

"Whoever denies that infants are by Christian baptism delivered from perdition, and brought to eternal salvation, let him be anathema." But it made poor headway, until the year

604, when Gregory, the Roman Bishop, formed a ritual for its celebration, and from that day to this, every denomination practising this Romish rite has used a man-made liturgy. When a Baptist minister is about to baptize, he reads from the New Testament.

The surest way to become a Baptist is to read the Bible. If every Baptist in the world died to-day, there would be Baptists to-morrow. Put the Bible in an inquirer's hand, and let him come to a conclusion from that alone, without hearing or reading anything else, and he will become a Baptist.

The most earnest advocates for Christian union are infant sprinklers, and their rituals, made necessary by infant baptism, are the insurmountable barriers to Christian union. The various denominations will never form an organic union, until they first surrender all "Prayer Books," "Creeds," "Disciplines," etc., and take the only possible basis of Christian union, the New Testament, as the all-sufficient ground of faith and practice.

Infant baptism implies a libel on God, it implies that baptism is a saving ordinance, and most people who have their babies baptized, if they do not believe in the horrible doctrine of infant damnation, yet fear that without baptism their darling child may be lost. The advocates of infant baptism practically teach that a child can not be saved without having a little water sprinkled on it. They deny it, of course, but their prescribed forms prove what I say.

One of the joys of my eleven years' ministry in this city is, that God has permitted me to bring His message to various minds, my congregation having been composed of at least eleven different denominations. One day, one of my parishioners asked me to christen a baby. I was requested to use the forms prescribed in the Prayer Book, as she was an Episcopalian. In the eleven years of my ministry in New York I never preached on baptism, and, in ten years, I practised infant baptism but once in public, but after I had finished reading this ceremony I was forever done with infant

sprinkling. After the rite was administered, I was obliged to read: "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits! . . . We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it has pleased Thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for Thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into Thy Holy Church."

In the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and North, the minister being about to christen a babe, says: "Dearly beloved, forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin, and that our Saviour Christ saith, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God'; I beseech you to call upon God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, that having of His bounteous mercy redeemed this child by the blood of His Son, He will grant that he being baptized with water may

also be baptized with the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's Holy Church. . . Grant that all carnal affections may die in him, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him. Amen." The Catholic manual says: "Baptism was instituted by Jesus Christ to cleanse the soul from sin. . . Baptism makes us Christians and members of the church. . . Baptism destroys all guilt of sin. . . What becomes of children who die unbaptized? It has not been revealed where they go, but they are certainly excluded from heaven." If the words in these rituals mean anything, infant baptism is a saving ordinance. This perversion of the Gospel is the foundation of popery and of the union of church and state in Protestant countries.

VII.

What Baptists Believe about Baptism.

Baptism does not save. It has no sacramental efficacy. We do not baptize men to save them, we baptize them because they are saved. We make less of baptism than any other church. We dare not say with the Episcopalians, that baptism makes us "members of Christ," or, with the Presbyterians, that it is not only a "sign," but "a seal of ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins." Baptists believe that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." But baptism, while not essential to salvation, is essential to a complete obedience, and a complete satisfaction of mind and heart. You were christened when a babe. Christening does not fulfil the conditions of baptism. Christening was not your act. It was done for you. You knew nothing about it; besides, in Acts xix: 16, there were

some baptized a second time, when they learned the truth about the baptism of Christ.

Baptism is a privilege. Love does not ask, What must we do? but, What may we? It ought to be enough for you that Christ was Himself immersed, and that He has commanded that believers should be baptized. Your duty is to obey. I have not been met with any argument to disprove my faithful adherence to the ordinance as the Lord appointed it—but sprinklers dodge the question at issue, and ask me: "What's the difference?" Would our Lord have given the command had he deemed it a matter of no consequence how it was obeyed? Would he have enjoined the use of water in one particular way, if any one of several ways, which best suited our convenience, would have fulfilled the command? If the very act which the word points out is not performed, then the command of the Lord is not obeyed. To change the act is to change the teaching of the ordinance. If the protest of those who preserve the ordinance in its original form and

significance is not regarded, they must separate themselves, and the blame for the separation will rest with those who are unmindful of Christ's command.

Multitudes of members of Pedobaptist Churches are dissatisfied with their baptism, many leave and submit to the ordinance as Christ appointed it, and many remain, just because they dread a change, willing rather to be subject to continual uneasiness. No one can realize more clearly than I did, when I laid down one of the most powerful and attractive positions that a minister ever enjoyed, the magnitude of that act whereby a man breaks away from all the associates of a life and takes that position which not only confesses that he had been wrong all his life-time, but also pronounces thereby an unwilling judgment on those whom you learned to love; but, painful as was the separation, it is not worthy to be compared with the pleasure of practising what you can conscientiously preach, and to know that you teach baptism and administer it as Christ commanded.

If you doubt the Scripturalness of infant baptism, you are condemned if you practise it. Give this subject the prayerful consideration which its importance demands. You who know what the baptism is which Jesus received, but have never submitted yourselves to it, remember that Christ has said: "If ye love me keep my commandments," and, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized." "His commandments are not grievous," "and in the keeping of them there is great reward."

VIII.

"Close" Communion.

On the communion question I have not changed my former position. All evangelical denominations of Christians believe that baptism should precede the Lord's Supper, and that none ought to partake of the second ordinance who have not observed the first. Among Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Congregationalists, Catholics, etc., it is the commonly admitted and established custom not to allow the unbaptized to come to the Lord's table. This is close communion. There are really no open communionists. As soon as any qualification whatever is required, the communion ceases to be open. All denominations require baptism as the indespensable qualification, therefore all are close communionists. In fact, sprinklers carry their close communion further than the Baptists; they exclude from

the Lord's table their own members, the baptized children. If the children are suitable subjects for baptism, why exclude them from the communion? They were admitted to it when infant baptism first began to be practised.

To the Lord's table we are at liberty to invite only those who, according to His word, are qualified. To my own table I can invite whom I please, but I am not at liberty to modify the qualifications laid down by Christ. An individual has no more right to take liberties with the communion than he has to take liberties with the ordinance of baptism. There are no "close" communion Baptists, but "close baptism" Baptists. We hold that baptism is a prerequisite to the Lord's Supper, and that nothing but the immersion of a believer in water, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, is Scriptural baptism, and inevitably and logically we are led to the Baptist position on the communion question. We believe that baptism is the door which Christ has put at the entrance of his church. If any choose

to participate in this ordinance who have not come in by Christ's appointed door, they do it on their own responsibility. No man has a right to be more liberal than the Word of God allows him to be. We conscientiously adhere to what we believe to be the Word of God—that baptism is immersion, that baptism is for believers only, and that those who have not been immersed since they have believed, have not been baptized, and, according to the Gospel order, those who have not been immersed have no Scriptural basis on which to come to the Lord's table.

IX.

Are Baptists Bigoted?

I have heard nothing lately, but, "How could you become a Baptist? Baptists are so bigoted." To hear people talk you might think that Baptists were liberal only in their supply of water. The Baptist denomination is the only really broad Evangelical church. Every individual Baptist is free to interpret the Bible for himself, and is responsible to God alone for the manner in which he interprets it. Heresy trials are unknown in Baptist history; creeds, catechisms, commentaries, confessions and systems have never fettered Baptist minds. A Baptist can proclaim the Bible as he understands it. The Bible only prescribes the rule of faith and practise for a Baptist. Instead of being pinched, dwarfed and shut up, I feel that, in becoming a Baptist, I have become enlarged, ennobled and set free.

Notwithstanding that every Baptist Church is a spiritual democracy and absolutely independent of every other church, no church, it is admitted, clings with intenser loyalty to evangelical truth, and without fastening any man-made creeds on Baptists, there is a remarkable agreement among all Baptists touching all matters of faith and practise. Of all evangelical churches the Baptists alone can consistently demand free thought, free research and free speech as the sacred right of the individual. Soul liberty is the immortal Baptist principle —a principle "by blood of ancient worthies bought." The twin serpents, civil tyranny and religious bigotry were crushed by Baptists. Rejecting infant baptism and holding to the absolute freedom of choice in religion, a union of church and state became impossible. Let the state attend only to what belongs to the state —the doctrine first proclaimed by Baptists— has revolutionized governments and made republics possible.

Baptists bigoted? Do you forget the historic

fact that the ruling principle of our free institutions, absolute soul-liberty, now the American idea, was originally the Baptist idea—that originally it belonged to Baptists alone? The Baptists in Massachusetts, in Virginia and in the Carolinas, were banished, imprisoned, fined and whipped because they determined that church and state should never be again united, and religious persecution never again be known on American soil.

Bancroft, the historian, and a Unitarian, attributes to Roger Williams, the founder of one of the earliest Baptist churches in America, the honor of being "the discoverer of the great truth, freedom of conscience in the administration of civil government." Again he says: "Freedom of conscience, unlimited freedom of mind, was from the first the trophy of the Baptists." The scholarly Methodist Bishop, John F. Hurst, in his "Short History of the Christian Church," speaking of the early history of this country, says: "To the Baptists belongs the honor of being the heralds. They

began amid the first excitement of the Revolutionary struggle."

It was the example of the little Buck Mountain Baptist church, near the home of Thomas Jefferson, in which all questions were settled by a vote of the majority, that led the great statesman to say that he "considered a Baptist Church the only form of pure democracy in the world then existing, and had concluded that it would be the best plan of government for these American Colonies." In 1809, writing to the members of this church, Thomas Jefferson said: "We have acted together to the end of a memorable revolution, and we have contributed, each in the line allotted us, our endeavors to render its issues a permanent blessing to our country." Thomas Jefferson was the author of the bill which fully established religious liberty by law, in Virginia, in 1785.

A National Constitution for the United States was adopted in 1787. The Baptist General Committee in Virginia felt that liberty of conscience, which was dearer to them than

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property or life, was not sufficiently guarded, and after a consultation with James Madison, they so wrote to President Washington, and in the very next month Virginia proposed that immortal first amendment which planted absolute religious liberty in our National Constitution. For that glorious triumph, the American people are largely indebted to the Baptists—the pioneers of religious liberty.

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